

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 00529 242056Z

ACTION HA-02

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

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LIMDIS

HONG KONG PASS TO INS DIDIR FELDMAN

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR MRN 0529 VICE 0520

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SUBJECT: CANDIAN BOAT REFUGEE PROGRAM

REF: BANGKOK 0844

1. SECOND SECRETARY WILLIAM SHEPPIT OF CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION
IN SINGAPORE CALLED ON REFUGEE AFFAIRS SECTION ON FRIDAY,
JANUARY 20. (SHEPPIT RESPONSIBLE FOR CANADIAN REFUGEE PROGRAMS
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PAGE 02 KUALA 00529 242056Z

IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.) DURING CONVERSATION, HE REVEALED DETAILS OF
GOC PLAN TO INSTITUTE NEW PROGRAM FOR INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEES.

2. SHEPPIT STATED THAT AS SOON AS RESIDUAL NUMBERS OF REFUGEES
PRESENTLY BOUND FOR CANADA CAN BE CLEARED FROM REGION, A NEW
CANADIAN BOAT RPT BOAT REFUGEE PROGRAM WILL COMMENCE.
FIFTY REFUGEE FAMILIES RPT FAMILIES PER MONTH, HE SAID,

WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR IMMIGRATION TO CANADA. TENTATIVE PLAN OUTLINES QUOTA OF 35 FAMILIES PER MONTH FROM THAILAND/MALAYSIA, 10 FAMILIES PER MONTH FROM PHILIPPINES AND 5 FAMILIES PER MONTH FROM HONG KONG. SHEPPIT SAID THAT CANADIAN IMMIGRATION TEAM WOULD ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA WORKING IN ONE COUNTRY TO ACCEPT 35 FAMILIES ONE MONTH AND THEN WORKING IN THE OTHER COUNTRY FOLLOWING MONTH TO ACCEPT ANOTHER 35 FAMILIES OF BOAT REFUGEES.

3. CANADIAN OFFICER WAS QUITE SENSITIVE TO PUBLICITY REGARDING NEW PROGRAM. HE STATED THAT THE MINISTRY(MANPOWER AND IMMIGRATION) WAS QUOTE FORTUNATE IN HAVING DEPT PAST REFUGEE PROGRAMS LOW KEY IN TERMS OF PUBLICITY UNQUOTE AND THAT HE HOPED LUCK WOULD HOLD IN TTERMS OF AVOIDING POSSIBLE ADVERSE PUBLIC OPINION IN CANADA REGARDING ADMISSION OF MORE INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES. SENSITIVITY TO PUBLICITY ISSUE UNDERSCORED BY SHEPPIT'S STATEMENT TO EFFECT GOC NOT YET DECIDED AS TO HOW NEW PROGRAM WILL BE ANNOUNCED TO CONCERNED GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGION. SHEPPIT STATED FURTHER THAT HE FEELS VOA, BBC AND AUSTRALIAN NEWS RELEASES CONCERNING NEW BOAT PROGRAMS HAVE ENCOURAGED HEAVIER FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM VIET-NAM INTO COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM.

4. EMBOFF AND SHEPPIT DISCUSSED COORDINATEION OF NEW CANADIAN PROGRAM WITH THOSE OF OTHER COUNTRIES ACCEPTING BOAT REFUGEES. IT WAS AGREED THAT EMBASSY REFUGEE AFFAIRS
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PAGE 03 KUALA 00529 242056Z

SECTION COULD EXPEDITE CANADIAN PROCESSING BY PASSING TO CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION SINGAPORE DOSSIERS OF REFUGEES PRESENTLY IN NOT-ACCEPTED-BY-U.S.-OR-THIRD-COUNTRY CATEGORY BUT WITH PROSPECTS FOR ACCEPTANCE BY CANADA. NUMBER SUCH CASES CURRENTLY ON FILE EMBASSY REFUGEE SECTION. THIS ACTION WOULD BE AS SUPPLEMENT TO UNHCR INTERVIEW FORM WHICH GIVES BAREST DETAILS OF REFUGEES' BACKGROUND.

5. COMMENT: NEWS OF CANADIAN PROGRAM AUSPICIOUS CONSIDERING APPREHENSION OF GOM REGARDING NUMBER OF ARRIVALS (500 SO FAR IN JANUARY) BOAT REFUGEES MALAYSIA AT WORST PERIOD OF MONSOON SEASON. GOM OFFICIALS ON EAST COAST COMMENT THAT IF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ARRIVE AT THIS RATE DURING MONSOON, EVEN HEAVIER NUMBERS MUST SURELY ARRIVE AS WEATHER GETS BETTER. REFUGEE REACTION TO POST CANADIAN PROGRAMS HAS NOT BEEN VERY ENTHUSIASTIC. CHARACTERISTIC FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO SURVIVE IN COLD CANADIAN CLIMATE REDUCES NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TO CANADA. POST FEELS THAT 35 MALAYSIAN CAMP FAMILIES EVERY OTHER MONTH WILL NEVERTHELESS BE ACCEPTED FOR IMMIGRATION TO CANADA NOTWITHSTANDING REFUGEE APPREHENSION AND ANTICIPATING, AS WELL, FAIRLY DISCRIMINATING CANADIAN CRITERIA. REGARDING LATTER, SHEPPIT MADE REFERENCE TO CANADIAN PREFERENCE FOR

REFUGEES WITH RELATIVES IN CANADA, FOR REFUGEES WHO HAVE SKILLS
NOW IN DEMAND IN CANADA AND FOR THOSE WITH FLUENCY IN
EITHER FRENCH OR ENGLISH.
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